



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang
Consumers Association of Penang
檳城消費人協會 பிளாங்கு பயனீட்டாளர் சங்கம்

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Press Statement

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Penang Forum and Consumer Association of Penang
How is MBPP ensuring effective public participation?

We welcome the MBPP's announcement that the Penang Island Draft Local Plan will be on display and for review from members of the public for 2 months from 14 October to 13 December. Public Participation in connection with the Draft Local Plan is provided for under the Town and Country Planning 1976 (Act 172), Section 13. In 2001, the TCPA was amended to include section 12A which requires publicity to be given to the proposed Draft Local Plan BEFORE its preparation. The public has been waiting 14 years for the exhibition of the Penang Island Local Plan, since we heard that the Draft Local Plan was ready and approved by the then MPPP in 2008.

We regret that the Draft Local Plan is only displayed in two locations in Penang island, and only during limited office hours when people are working. This does not encourage public viewing.

We request that the Draft Local Plan be displayed in more locations, that the Local Authorities conduct a "roadshow" from area-to-area as is the practice in other cities and municipalities, and townhall in at least 5 locations in populated areas.

We further request the MBPP to make the Draft Local Plan freely available online, hosted on the MBPP website, so that it may be easily fully accessible and fully downloadable to property owners who are not living in Penang. In fact, we expect the Penang State Government would want to do this in view of its Competency, Accountability, Transparency tagline, and the MBPP's public spending towards becoming a Smart City.

Given that the Local Council took so long to produce this document, we would like to request an extension of four more weeks, as provided for under Section 13(3) of the Act, for the following reasons:

- There was little publicity and consultation about the Local Plan BEFORE the publicity period, which is required under Section 12a of the Act. As far as we know, the publicity and consultation was made before 2008, which was 14 years ago, can no longer be considered as relevant since the situation has changed greatly.
- The announcement of the DRTTP should have been made BEFORE but instead was made ONE WEEK after the publicity period, which means we have lost one week.
- The authorities and some stakeholders are occupied with the upcoming general elections campaigning period.

The Local Council is required under the TCPA to actively promote popular participation in the Draft Local Plan process, because citizens, residents and stakeholders have the right to be informed about Local Council planning for their areas and the issues that will affect them – such as building density, recreational open space, mobility, flood mitigation and coastal reclamation.

Section 13 of the Act says that objections to, or representations in respect of, the draft local plan may be made to the local planning authority. Surely, the number and diversity of respondents will be an indicator of public participation. Those objecting may also request a local inquiry or hearing to be held by a committee of three persons appointed, which is allowed under Section 14 of the Act.

In conclusion, the Local Plan should adequately enhance mobility and spatial justice¹ as well as protect the existing character, local neighbourhoods, recreational amenities and environment of Penang in line with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, and the best way to ensure this is through effective public participation by all stakeholders.

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Dr Lim Mah Hui
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¹ Spatial justice involves “the fair and equitable distribution in space of socially valued resources and opportunities to use them”. Soja, E. (2009) The city and spatial justice. Spatial justice, n° 01 September 2009, <http://www.jssj.org>.